



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: LEA and ISD Superintendents, High School Principals
Directors and Authorizers of Public School Academies

FROM: Mike Flanagan, Superintendent 
Jeremy M. Hughes, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent 

DATE: December 4, 2006

SUBJ: MICHIGAN MERIT EXAM TESTING

A number of districts and schools have inquired about the regulations regarding testing conditions when the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) is administered this spring. As all are aware, for security and other purposes the ACT requires specific testing conditions such as the separation of students from each other, prohibitions on interruptions, etc.

Because the MME is an integral unit of assessments, of which the ACT is only one part, this department previously indicated that the testing conditions for ACT are appropriate and should be maintained for all elements of the MME. That is still our recommendation.

While acknowledging the necessity of strict testing conditions for the ACT, some districts and schools have been reporting difficulty in arranging those same conditions for the other MME elements.

Recognizing and acknowledging this, by virtue of this memorandum, districts and schools may be permitted to conduct the other elements of the MME (not including the ACT) under other conditions developed by the district or school, with great caution and under the following conditions:

1. That the district and school make every effort possible to apply the ACT testing conditions to as many other elements of the MME as possible.
2. That the district and school make every effort possible to impress upon students that the individual students' – and the school's – achievement on the MME and eligibility for the Merit Award will be a combined measure of ALL the elements of the MME, not just the ACT.

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3. That the district and school make every effort possible to impress upon students the serious nature of the MME assessment, and that any change in testing conditions does not imply one element (e.g. ACT) is more important and should be taken more seriously than any of the others.

The department wishes to emphasize our belief that the ACT testing conditions are important to be maintained for all elements of the MME. It is our hope that departures from these conditions, although allowed by virtue of this memorandum, will be employed only if necessary and only to the degree necessary, and that districts and schools that have been successful in arranging ACT test conditions to be maintained throughout the entire MME assessment will continue to do so.

This department and the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals want schools, students and parents to know that the High School MEAP test has been replaced by the entire three-day Merit Exam – not with only the ACT test. Federal law requires ALL high school content standards to be assessed, and students need to be made aware of the importance of all the components of the Merit Exam and to take them all seriously.

This regulation has required us to supplement the ACT with other assessments, covering state curriculum standards areas the ACT does not test. Several advisory committees recommended to us that the seriousness of the entire MME assessment can best be maintained if all assessments are administered under the same conditions. The department accepts that recommendation and urges this upon districts and schools to the extent possible.

Knowing that many school districts have followed Michigan Department of Education recommendations and scheduled beyond the 1,098-hour state attendance minimum, this recommended MME schedule should not negatively affect a district's instructional time requirements.

The flexibility allowed by this memorandum would permit schools to administer the other components of the MME in the following manner:

- The WorkKeys and Michigan components of the MME could be administered in regular classrooms by regular classroom teachers.
- Administration could occur in the high school with other students (non-eleventh graders) present, so long as the timed sessions are administered according to the written directions.

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- The test sections need to be administered in the specified order – WorkKeys at the start of the second day (March 14), followed by the Michigan mathematics section. Then one additional test session needs to be conducted for the Michigan science and social studies tests, on March 14, 15, or 16.
- Students need to be given sufficient time (as outlined in the test manuals) to complete each section of the test uninterrupted.

For questions or further clarification, please feel free to contact Ed Roeber (roebere@michigan.gov or 517-373-0739) or Jeremy M. Hughes (hughesj@michigan.gov or 517-335-0011).